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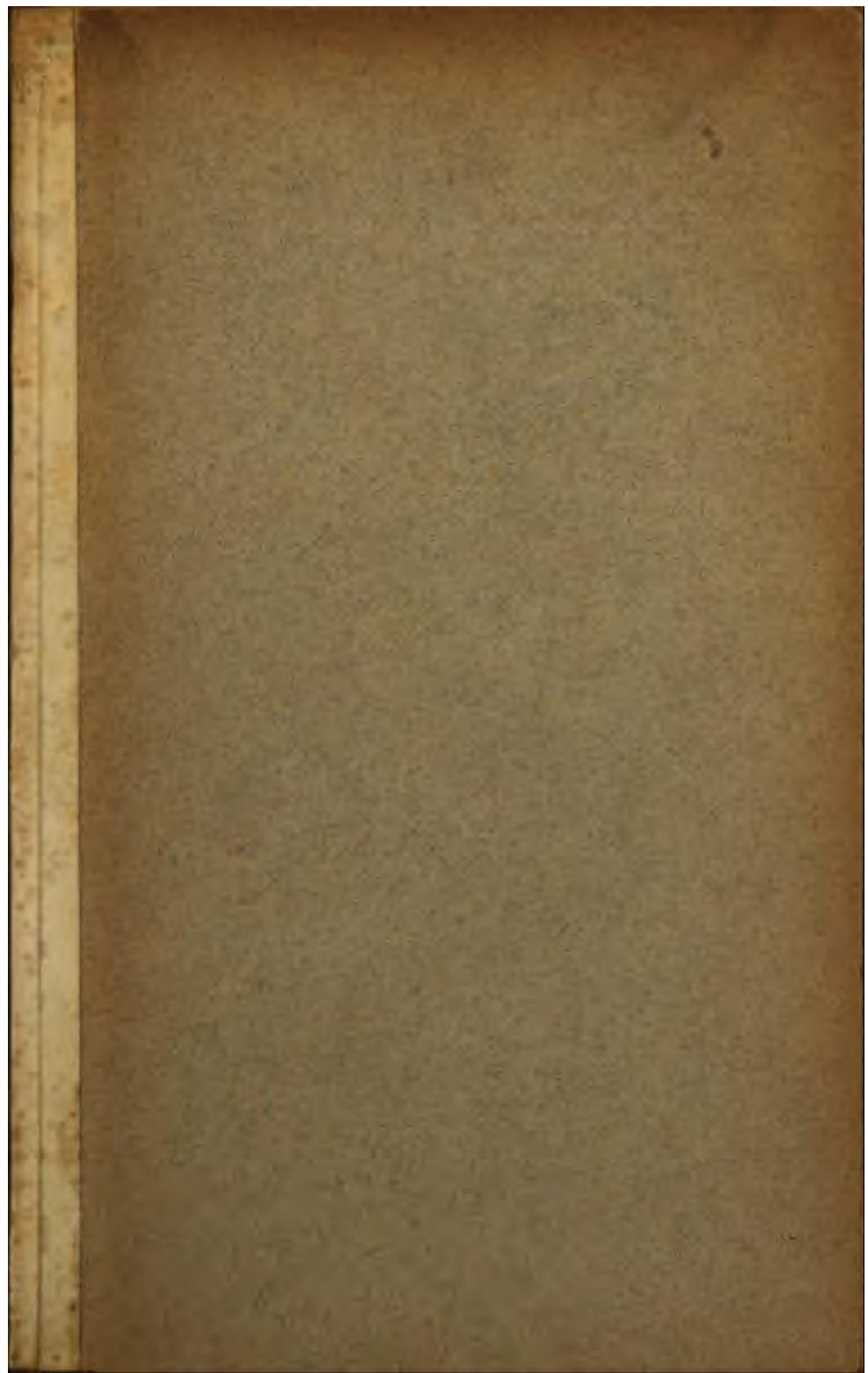
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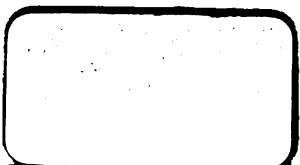
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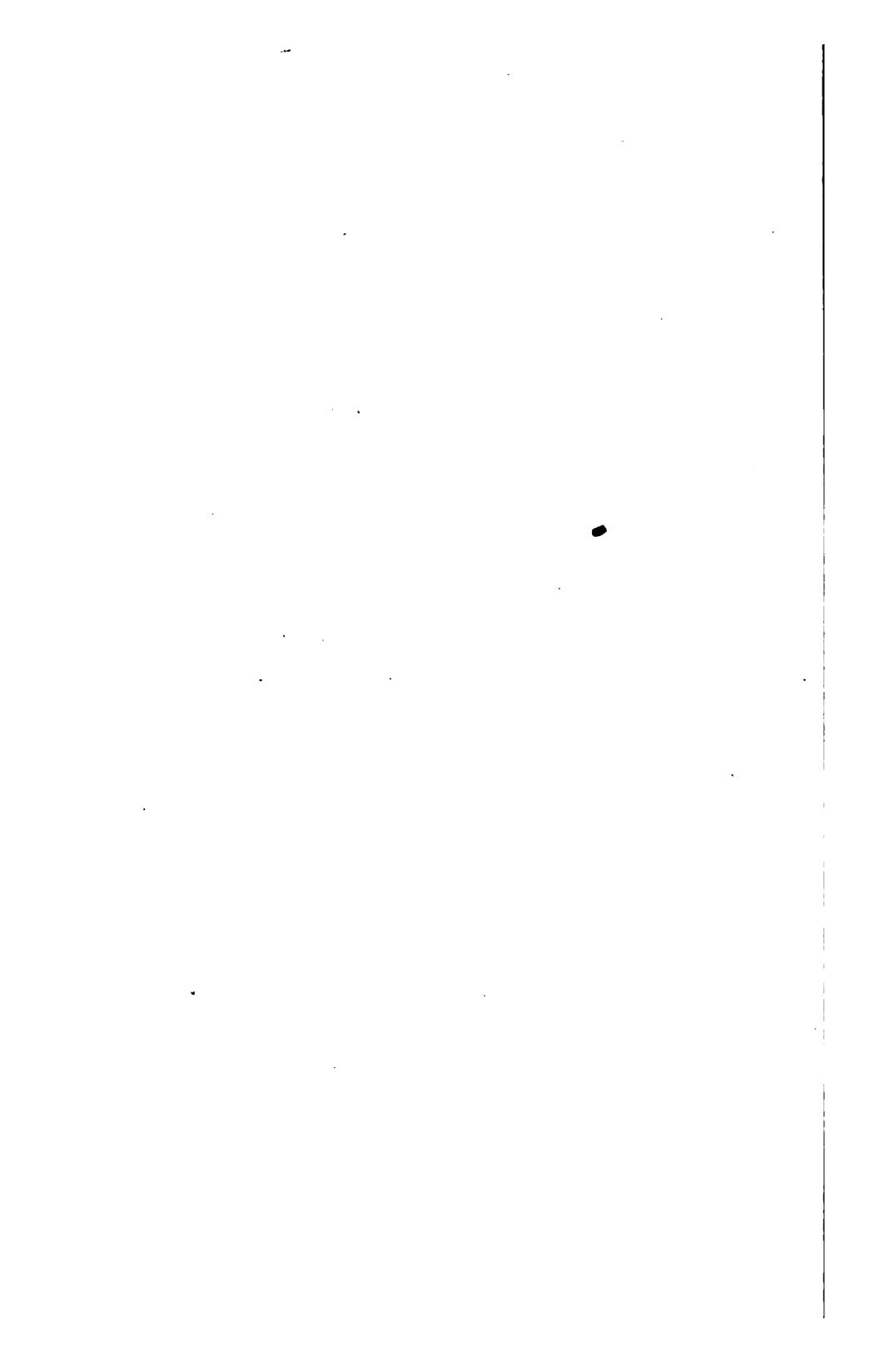
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SISTERS OF MERCY, SISTERS OF MISERY:

OR

MISS SELLON IN THE FAMILY;

WITH SOME

REMARKS

ON

"A REPLY TO THE REV. JAMES SPURRELL;"

"TWO LETTERS TO THE REV. EDWARD COLERIDGE,"

*etc., etc.*

BY

THE REV. W. M. COLLES, A.B.,

CURATE OF MELTON MOWBRAY.

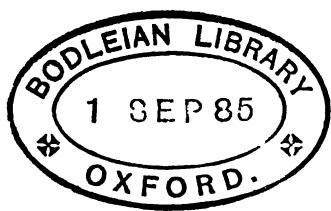
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## P R E F A C E.

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THE writer of the following pages thinks it right to offer a few words of explanation, and to give his reasons for endeavouring to keep this subject before the public at this time.

The publication of a pamphlet entitled “Miss Sellon and the Sisters of Mercy,” by the Rev. J. Spurrell, has drawn the attention of many to the existence of a monastic establishment in connexion with the Church of England. The constitution, rules, and forms of worship of the “Sisters of Mercy,” have been brought forward, and all who care for these things can judge whether they are *really* Romish or not.

The working and worship of the “Sisters” prove them to be, *in reality*, a sect of Dissenters from the Church of England. They have provided unauthorised rites and observances; have prevailed on clergymen to officiate in their way, and have obtained the sanction of a Bishop to some of their proceedings;—thus gaining credit for the great good proposed to be effected by the Sisterhood.

These things will, probably, be investigated by the proper authorities in the Church, whose duty it is to see all things done decently, and in order.

Facts may thus be exposed, and Popish practices may be condemned; but feelings which harrow up the soul and destroy its peace, cannot be searched out by man. The Romish principles developed in the following pages, can only be opposed by the power and grace of God.

The *working of this system in the family* is the point to which we would draw the reader's attention. We desire to stop the supply of money for such mummeries as have already been exposed. We would now endeavour to stop the supply of "Sisters" for such Sisterhoods of Misery, not of Mercy.

The following attempt to expose this system is the result of a careful investigation of its workings in the family ; the writer has before him many fragments of the correspondence by which much misery has been produced, with the assistance of one who has long observed this delusion, and has reasoned with those deceived by Miss Sellon ; and has found such reasonings, though founded on the Word of God, to be set aside and disregarded. We are anxious that others should escape from the snare ; and should any further proof of the existence of a regularly organised system for supplying "Sisters" be needed, the writer recommends the perusal of a pamphlet entitled "Sisterhoods Considered,"\* which affords additional testimony to the sufferings of other families, that, in the mouth of two or three witnesses, the truth may be established, and the evils of this system exposed.

The private troubles of Tractarianism still increase ; the little rill becomes a river flowing on to the great ocean of Infidelity ; its rise and progress are described in the following pages. The writer believes the beginnings of this delusion in the family, to be frequently as they are here represented ; he might add many evil results which have followed from these principles, but confines himself at present to the point already mentioned :—the working of the Sellon system in the family. Nothing but a sense of duty to Christ and His Church could have induced him to bring these hidden things to light: may God preserve the Church and Nation from the evils of this false and fatal system.

\* This very excellent pamphlet, published by Rivingtons, contains some remarks on the Bishop of Brechin's "Plea for Sisterhoods," and is worthy of attentive perusal.

## MISS SELLON IN THE FAMILY.

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SPIRITUAL DIRECTION is now taught and practised by a section of the clergy in the Church of England. Dr. Pusey, in the preface to his sermon on the "Entire Absolution of the Penitent," preached before the University of Oxford, in the year 1846, supposes the case of "religious parents teaching their children to confess their faults to themselves, and then, at a somewhat riper age, transferring them to a minister of God to open their hearts to him;"\* he refers to the pious GERSON (A.D. 1400), who speaks of confession as "directrix effecacissima ad Christum," and asks, "who shall venture to call that 'Priestcraft' which is the channel of God's grace to the soul?" He also refers to BAILLY, the "Manuel des Confesseurs," and other Romish "Manuals," showing very plainly the source from which his principles and practice of confession are derived.

He mentions "the increase of the individual application of the power of the keys among us;"† (i. e. confession to a priest for the purpose of receiving absolution), and states that, "its increased use is not the result of any theory, but of God's grace shaking the inmost souls of penitents, and giving them the longing for that relief which he has appointed."

This pretended supply of peace through the channel of confession, soon increases the demand for priests to exercise their power; some persons, from various causes, are led to try this remedy for yearning souls, and aching hearts, and intense longings for inward peace: they confess to a priest for some time, and finding little comfort, they want something more, and Sisterhoods are established for the reception of penitents.

\* Preface, p. xvii.

† Page 57.

Confession to the Spiritual Director or Guide, and to the Mother Superior, is permitted and encouraged in the Sisterhood. The Superior speaks as Jesus Christ; the Director claims a similar power; the thoughts are written in a book called the "Little Soul," for the Superior's inspection; the Director reads them in the soul before they are expressed in writing; the Superior degrades a "Sister" to the rank of a "novice" for nine months, taking away the Sister's "dress," which is "held *sacred*," the Director or Guide tells the sinning Sister to *make the sign of the cross with her tongue on the floor of the oratory*. The Director's power over the person under his direction is greater than the power of the parent; the Superior's permission must be obtained before the Sister can comply with her own mother's commands.

We would now bring before the reader a family who had just arrived in London; they attended the church near their residence, and the young ladies devoted much of their time to schools, and districts, and duties to the poor. The clergyman had the opportunity of instructing them in his peculiar doctrines, and was generally considered to belong to the class called Tractarian. Some time passed away, and the family ceased to have any communication with this clergyman, and left his church and neighbourhood; in about two years after their removal to another parish, one of the young ladies renewed her acquaintance with this clergyman for the purpose of confession and absolution. This confession, and the spiritual direction resulting therefrom, continued for some time, when the young lady was moved to inquire about the Sisterhood then forming under the management of Miss Sellon. She received information, through a friend, to the following effect: that the Bishop of Exeter had given his consent to the prospectus of the Sisterhood being published; that an Asylum for Orphans was to be opened, and the whole thing to bear the name of the Orphan's Home;—that money was wanted, but labour still more, and especially that a little band should be gathered at once to avail themselves of the promise of Weekly Communion and Daily Service;—that they would gladly receive any one who could and would come and work for a few weeks or months, and be with them *as a visitor*, only conforming to the rules of the house;—the plan of the Sisterhood was also described;—Miss Sellon was to be the Mother Superior;—the Sisters were not to take any vows, nor to remain longer than they felt happy; they might receive letters unopened from relatives or friends, sanctioned by their *Guide*, or by the Superior; they might receive visits

from female friends or brothers, and should be very cheerful, and happy, and refined, as well as devoted ;—a suggestion was offered, that the young lady could come on a visit first, if she liked ; meals, hours, and recreation, were mentioned, and books of poetry sanctioned by the Superior were to be allowed ;—seven orphans to be taken in at once, and those who came as visitors might help in the care of the orphans ; they would not wear the Sister's dress, but they might come in simple black ; the dress was described, and the cord round the waist, to which a cross was to be fastened, a cross of black ebony with a raised line all round it, and the triangle in the centre, and the ebony to be very black.

The young lady having received this information, immediately sought the *direction* of her *Spiritual Guide* : she follows his advice, it is presumed, informs her mother, and obtains from her a *reluctant consent* that she should go *as a visitor for three months* ; the probable perversity of a younger sister to Popery affords an additional plea.

A daughter, once affectionate as a child and a sister, and exemplary in all the duties of social and domestic life, useful among the poor of her neighbourhood, beloved and valued by all who knew her, is thus disturbed by spiritual direction, and disturbs the peace of her family, instead of finding peace for herself.

Miss Sellon sends an invitation to one whose home has become wearisome ; saying that, the services of herself and her sister were thankfully accepted on behalf of the poor of her neighbourhood, and setting forth the prospect of exclusive devotion to our blessed Lord's service in serving his poor, mingled with prayers, that the holy desire might be strengthened to overcome the pangs of separation from her family, and praises of her love and devotion,—the spirit of the rules of the Sisterhood ; and the round of devotion and work, and teaching schools and serving the poor, were urged with the Superior's peculiar power.

While she thus allures the young lady from her mother and her home, and assumes the place of a spiritual mother, and explains the pleasures and pursuits of the new home, the *Spiritual Guide* writes to the young lady's mother, already wearied by her daughter's importunity, and wavering as to her path of duty :—he supposes that she naturally wishes to hear from him under her trying circumstances, refers to the opening which has presented itself to her daughters in so providential a manner, as a subject of deep gratitude to God ; he alludes to the bare possibility of her child being led

away to deny her Baptism,—Church—the Church of her father and mother, as a miserable prospect to be contemplated with unspeakable dread ; says, that God has interfered to open a channel for her excited feelings ; that at one time he did not encourage the idea for her sister or herself, but that now, he can more than thankfully acquiesce.

Here the reader will observe, the principles of Romanism are first taught and practised by the *Spiritual Guide*; the confessional affords a ready way of knowing the secrets of the family and their feelings on this subject; the young lady seeks for peace in spiritual direction, not from HIM who alone can be our Guide and Comforter in all our ways, but from a weak and erring man ; she finds no peace, but pain ; her home, and her parent, and her sisters, lose their influence ; she is altogether changed ; the danger of perversion to the Romish principles, taught and practised by the Spiritual Guide, is brought forward as a plea for the Sisterhood, and the whole scheme is ascribed to the wonderful working and providential care of God.

While the Superior and the Spiritual Director thus act their parts in the working of this system, the young lady proves that she can do something to accomplish the separation from her family ;—she alludes in a touching manner to the trial of separation, and her path of duty to her God *who has called* her to accept the offer of serving his poor for three months : says, this call is so clear and manifest that she may well bear trials in the fulfilling of his will ; she describes her mother's reluctance to part with her as giving way before the hand of God ; declares that nothing but a firm persuasion of God's will that she should devote herself more exclusively to his service, would have been able to strengthen her to bear the trial of adding to her mother's anxieties ; that the path of obedience is safety and real blessedness ; that should any urgent cause arise she would, *in obedience to him, whom, of course, in such an important step she had consulted*, be willing to return. The desire of saving her sister from Romanism was also expressed, with a hope that all opposition to their making trial of the Sisterhood for three months might cease.

The process of *destroying natural affection*, to make room for what they call spiritual ties, the *power of obedience to the Spiritual Guide*, and the *plea of Popery* are thus manifested, in full operation ; the young lady persuades her mother to have interviews with her Guide ; they hear a sermon on Luke ix. 62, and receive the Holy Communion at his hands ; the mother, still doubting and dreading the

result of a visit for three months, is reasoned with by the Guide in a solemn manner:—he alludes to the responsibility of advising as being sacredly exercised by him in God's sight (he was not the appointed pastor of this family); says, that he has committed the matter to God, and he exhorts the mother, now needing support herself, to support her daughters under this great trial of separation; he says, that it may be but for a short visit; that he has not allowed anything like committing themselves to anything more, and they will return at any time at the call of *duty*; that *they will not judge altogether for themselves as to duty in this*;—that if there be reason, he will advise their return at any time,—that they are going for *three months*; and he advises her to leave the future in the hands of Him to whose grace he earnestly commends her.

The object is accomplished by these means; the young ladies go to Devonport *on a visit for three months*, and their mother strives to be reconciled while thus satisfying her children, anxiously looks forward to their return, and resigns herself, as she supposes, to the will of God.

As the time appointed for this visit passes on, the anxious mother is assured by some friends that the Bishop of Exeter has a very high opinion of the institution, and of the discretion and pious zeal of the foundress; that the internal, as well as the external arrangements, are such as he highly approves; that the greatest deference has always been paid to his opinion; that he is anxious to prevent the admission of "Sisters" against the wishes of their parents, (even when the consent has been *reluctantly given*,) and has suggested a preventive rule to this effect,—that no vows were to be taken by, or imposed upon the Sisters, and that they need not remain longer than they are happy. This soothes, in some sort, the anxiously waiting mother, who now urges her daughters' return home; but, instead of obedience to her wishes, she is informed by her daughter, now further instructed in the Sellon System during her visit, that she believed herself, from the first, to be *called by the voice of God* to devote all that she possessed, herself, body, soul, and spirit, to the holy society he had raised up in his Church; that the yearnings of her heart for many past years were about to be fulfilled; that it was the settled purpose of her soul to devote herself to works of charity; that God, who gave her the desire, gave her also faith and patience to wait till a home should be formed in the Church for those whom he has appointed to serve Him entirely apart from the

world ; that she could not disobey *the voice of God speaking to her inmost soul* ; and that she could not live happily apart from the holy Sisterhood ;—great as her affection for her mother was, and grieved as she was to put her to any pain,—she tells her to *obey God*,—that her sister had not yet found the inward peace which would make her happy in that state of life,—that discipline had been of use, but she was not yet happy ; as for the affectionate care of brothers and sisters, her Lord whom she served had done more for her than father, mother, brothers, sisters, and for his sake she was willing to be considered cold-hearted ; that we should “ bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ ;” and that, if her mother wished her to share a happy eternity, she must not ask her to forsake her vocation, but help her with her prayers, and willingly bear the trial of separation.

The struggle between natural affection and slavish obedience to the Sellon System must be severe ; the Superior is well skilled in the management of mothers and daughters, and seeks to destroy the finest feelings of our fallen nature under the plea of crucifying the affections, and fulfilling the law of Christ. The mother’s authority is trampled on, her counsel is set at nought ; the “ visit for three months ” vanishes as the time expires, and her fears of separation from her daughter for life appear likely to be forerunners of the fact. The holy vocation is pleaded, persuasion is indeed used sparingly, but the firm determination to continue in the Sisterhood is opposed to the mother’s entreaties for her child’s return ; her consent, *reluctantly given for a visit of three months*, is called a consent for no limited time. She perceives that her only hope must be through the influence of the Spiritual Director, and she goes to him in her deep distress. He gives no hope of her daughter’s return, tells her mother that “ she is an obedient child of the Church,” and that if he chose to summons her to his presence, she would obey ; but that no other power has any influence with her, and that he would not call her from her holy vocation. The mother represents her distress, and that of her family, at this result of what she considered a visit for three months. The Director writes a letter, which she might show her family, and tells her to answer no other questions ; he mentions his impression that *one daughter should return*, and his doubts about her going, which was only through fear of the greater evil, of her joining the Church of Rome ; that his doubts have been confirmed, and he fears

that *to oblige her to return would be dangerous*; he expresses his willingness that she should return at once, if her family wished this, but that he could bear no part of the responsibility of such a step, and on the whole *he advised that the sisters should remain at Devonport till Easter.*

The working of this system under the Spiritual Director may be observed: the contradiction and confusion created by his doubts and fears must have added perplexity to pain. He lets the mother know something of his power over her daughter during their interview, and having helped to deceive her about the "visit of three months," he advises that her daughters should remain at Devonport for two or three months longer, and that she should silence her family at home by showing his letter. The poor mother, now wearied and well nigh worn out with hopes disappointed, and confidence misplaced, becomes seriously ill. An appeal is again made to the once warm and affectionate heart of her daughter at Devonport, in the hope that her mother's distress and desire for her return would have some effect; she was told that the sacrifice of herself to the Sisterhood was too much for her mother's health and strength, and was asked to visit her for three months in the year, if she could not leave the Sisterhood, and thus comfort, during a short time, her only surviving parent.

These appeals were made in vain; she merely expressed her determination to have her own way, because God works in us both to will and to do,—sets forth her desire to promote God's glory, and to further her everlasting salvation,—that circumstances made a rapid decision necessary, but *it was the voice of the Lord bidding her to make a sacrifice for his sake*,—that God would reward her family for bearing the trial of separation cheerfully,—that she was conscious of being the cause of giving her mother pain, but then she thought of the joy that awaited her,—that she finds the prejudice against her "Guide" so strong, it was of little avail to say anything in his defence,—that all should be humble and reverent in their manner of speaking of the priests of the Lord, and be ready to suffer little or much for the sake of the Church.

The firm determination to follow our "own ways," and to say that this is God's will, seems to be the great strength of this system. The voice of God speaking to the inmost soul, (as they suppose,) and bidding us to make a sacrifice for his sake, is more powerful than the written word, "Honour thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment

with promise." Families stand amazed and confounded at the change of character in one so affectionate ; all attempts fail ; her " friend and counsellor," " the priest of the Lord," must be supreme. Her word and his word must take the place of God's word ; she considers her own will as God's will ; arguments from Scripture, and appeals to the heart's best affections, are vain and powerless ; the future " Sister," under Miss Sellon's instruction, can bring forward " the voice of God."

All this saddens the soul, and well nigh sickens us with the thought that such should be the pretended results of perfection in our holy religion. Who can tell the secret misgivings of many as to the truth of a religion producing fruits such as these ? We must remember that some will not make the distinction between the plain precepts of the Gospel and this " piety" of man's invention. Let " Sisters" follow their " own ways," and carry out their own systems if they will ; we should pity their delusion, and pray for their deliverance from it ; but let not any suppose that such systems are required, or even permitted by the Gospel.

The well-known " Inquiry before the Bishop of Exeter," stirred the minds of many. Some said it was Popery ; the Bishop said they were angels, or something of the sort. Miss Sellon, in her recent *Letter to the Rev. Edward Coleridge*, tells us that she " felt sacredly, though silently, pledged to prove (after this inquiry) that Sisters of Mercy were not a set of weak sentimentalists, distinguished only by their womanly and innocent love of flowers, or by their religious value for the sign of the cross ; but that they were, as a whole, faithful, sober, zealous, religious-minded persons, who were devoting themselves to a certain work for the sake of the poor." Whether the recent exposure, and promised " Reply," will afford this proof, time will tell. However, the " Inquiry" might naturally be supposed to startle parents who had daughters in the Sisterhood ; the Spiritual Director comes forward, as might be supposed, and tells the mother in her trouble, that it is his duty to address her once more ; that the public excitement which had taken place made him fear that she might be excited and vexed by the conflicting tongues of passionate persons ; he expresses his feelings that, if ever there was a work in the Church of England under the direct blessing of our God, it was that blessed work at Devonport, in which her daughters had been permitted to share ; that he felt great difficulty in being their

adviser, but still he could not decline the task, and that they were to remain at Devonport for some time, and then return home, but that one expected to return to the Sisterhood ; and he expressed his confidence that she really looked on the blessed lot which her daughters had chosen with her consent, with feelings of *calm satisfaction*.

The young lady at Devonport seems to fear the result of the effects of the “inquiry” on her mother’s wavering mind. She regrets her sufferings, and fears that her anxiety about herself and sister might really make her ill,—says, that if it would be a relief to her mind, so much harassed by the exciting and false reports, they should feel it a pleasure and a duty to visit her ; but *if she could calmly and peacefully wait till Easter*,—she was sure she would do so,—when she heard that the dear Lady Superior was unwell, and that some visitors had gone away, and much injury might be done by the report that three of the little band had left,—that the kind Superior urged them to return, though it would greatly increase her anxieties and difficulties.

The attempts of the Spiritual Director, and the daughter, under his direction, failed in this instance. The mother can bear suspense no longer. The Director’s conduct, when she appealed in vain for her child’s return, contrasts strangely with his sympathy now offered ; she is puzzled by this cruelty and kindness, and resolves to submit no more to such treatment. She merely alludes to the inexpressible comfort of having her beloved daughters at home again, and declines to trouble him with any further discussion on the subject, or any future communication or interviews, as she was suffering from the agitating effects of the last one. The Spiritual Guide expresses his amazement at the return his painstaking and unvarying course of kindness had received, and says that the intercourse, *as far as she is concerned*, is terminated, and that he must bear the ingratitude of many for Christ’s sake. Instead of an affectionate friend, he now takes the place of an humble servant ; his wiles work no longer, as far as the mother was entangled by them, and she looks for the return of her daughters at Easter according to promise.

In the meantime, the Lady Superior recovers from her illness, and goes from Oxford to London to calm, if possible, this anxious mother’s troubled mind, and to point out the advantages of allowing her daughter to become a Sister of Mercy. She conveniently forgets, or lightly passes over, the misery her mercy had already caused, and exerts her

powers and persuasive reasoning to obtain the parent's consent. Much conversation on the Sisterhood took place; but this *consent was not given*. The mother refused to allow her daughters to become Sisters of Mercy, and the Superior agrees that they should be received *as visitors*, at times, for a year or two, that they might fully consider the subject.

The mother informs Miss Sellon of her dislike and dread that the Spiritual Guide should have such influence over her daughter, the Superior states that she has not the pleasure of knowing him, but believes him, from report, to be a holy man. It was afterwards proved to the satisfaction of the family, and acknowledged, as the writer is informed, by Miss Sellon herself, that she had an interview with the Director previous to her visit. It was said that she merely went for the proper address, which must have been forgotten by the Superior—strange compound of forgetfulness and illness as she seems to be. She might have remembered the address, as many letters were written from Devonport; but, DIRECTION was absolutely necessary at this time, for the judicious management of this difficult matter.

As the time of the expected return draws near, the young lady accompanies the Mother Superior, who is so much fatigued by travelling any distance that she requires her assistance. Many little delays hinder the long-expected visit, the mother is much tried with uncertainty and suspense, clinging to the hope that her daughters would return, and changing her place of residence that they might be induced to do so. She receives various communications, with suggestions that she should not recall her daughters abruptly, and assurances that there was no Romish tendency in Miss Sellon, and advice that she should still allow the young ladies to remain at Devonport; she is disturbed still more by conflicting opinions, while one of her daughters *pleads the hard trial of parting with the darling Lady Superior*, and prays that she may be allowed to return to the Sisterhood after her visit to her family. The Superior now comes forward, expressing her anxiety about this young lady, and her regret that she had not been informed of her tendency to Romanism; that she has found, from her conversation with some of the Sisters, that such is the case; that the visit to the Sisterhood was for the purpose of soothing and composing her mind, but this desire for Romanism was dreadful; that her influence was very great while the young lady was with her, but she could not answer for the consequences of her removal from under her care, still she

could not bear to keep the mother in suspense, and *she proposes a visit for three weeks or a month, and a return to the Sisterhood for three or six more months*, and that, if she agreed to this, they should return to their mother directly; that she would endeavour to write frequently during their absence from her, and entreating that this absence might be as short as possible, as she could not exercise the influence by letter which her presence could command; that she dreaded the consequence of the removal of her power over the young lady's mind, and feared her secession to the Church of Rome.

The mother, troubled and tormented enough, can bear this no longer; she thinks it is too much, even from a Mother *Superior*, and after suffering greatly, perplexed and distressed, she resolves to be terrified by threats of Romanism no more, informs the Lady Superior of the state of her mind, which we cannot here describe, and regrets that she had ever been influenced by her daughter's Spiritual Guide. She says plainly, that, as a mother, she must have her children, without any promises of their return to the Sisterhood; that she finds a difficulty in considering all this trouble as an acceptable offering to God, declares that they are all under a delusion, and demands the return of her daughters.

They complied with this oft-repeated request in a week, and, in three weeks from that time, one of the young ladies was peremptorily summoned to Devonport. She left her mother immediately, who was seriously ill at the time, in obedience to the command of the *Mother Superior*, in a few days informs her family that she had been received as a Sister of Mercy, and she adds the significant letters S. M. to her name.

The mother was quite unprepared for this step, supposing that her daughter had gone on a visit for some time, according to Miss Sellon's proposal—that they should visit her at times for a year or two. She represented this to Miss Sellon, who visited her after some months, saying she was much surprised that her daughter should have become a Sister of Mercy without her consent, which was contrary to the rules of the Institution. Miss Sellon merely said there must be some mistake, as she understood that the young lady had her full consent. In this way a sister was gained for the Sisterhood, and the mother, finding resistance useless, strives to be reconciled and satisfied with the vocation

chosen by her daughter under the impression that this is the will of God.

The writer has thus endeavoured to trace this system from its source, through some of its workings in the family, and from what has been already published by others, observing the great similarity of proceeding in several cases, he feels satisfied that *A regularly organized system is growing up in England for the purpose of re-establishing monastic institutions.* To prove that this strong resemblance may be observed in the working of this system in different cases, he takes the following passage from "Sisterhoods Considered":—

"I can also state from personal observation that a new member is often obtained for a Sisterhood by the following mysterious and Jesuitical process, which, however incredible it may appear, is understated rather than exaggerated, as many persons can bear witness. In the first place, an advocate of the convent system, either lay or clerical, obtains by degrees an unbounded influence over a female member of a family, which is generally followed up by invitations to visit at one of the 'homes.' After a few of these visits, the future Sister of Mercy is sure to find her own home and its duties irksome and distasteful, and to become restless, dissatisfied, and even changed in disposition. She who had hitherto, perhaps, been submissive to her parents, 'gentle and easy to be entreated,' becomes self-sufficient and perverse. She disregards the opinion and advice of those whom she had heretofore reverenced, and, breaking through all the ties of duty and affection, declares a determined resolution to forsake her home, and to become a Sister of Mercy.

"Though assuming a peculiar gentleness, softness, and humility of demeanour, she hardens herself against the tears and entreaties of her mother and sisters, and also against the advice of clerical friends, however judicious it may be. Even her own proper spiritual pastors—the clergy of the parish in which she resides, and the bishop of the diocese—may advise and admonish her in vain. The Sister-elect is supported in this disregard of parental and spiritual authority, by knowing that, despite its professed rules to the contrary, the 'home' will welcome her into its bosom as a kind of persecuted saint."\*

\* "Sisterhoods Considered," pp. 7, 8.

The reader of the foregoing pages will observe the way in which this system works to deceive. The Romanizing clergyman instructs his flock in the doctrines and delusions of Popery, and brings some young lady to avail herself of the privilege of private confession and absolution. He thus becomes acquainted with her disposition, the character of her family, and the secrets of her heart and her home. She hears of a Sisterhood, and applies to him, as her spiritual guide, for advice, expressing her desire for this vocation. He complies with her wishes, and, should any difficulty arise, the probability of secession to Rome to satisfy the feelings he has fostered is brought forward, and he represents to the astonished family that going to a Sisterhood for a time is far better than joining the Church of Rome, but the return to her home is put off from day to day, and at last she visits her family for a few weeks, and finally returns to the Sisterhood.

While this state of things is suffered in silence, there can be no natural affection—no obedience to parents—no peace in the family; the destruction of natural affection is considered meritorious, and the disturbance of peace and harmony in the home is the result. The father will be neglected for the spiritual father, whose power is supposed to be from God; the mother will be deserted for the spiritual mother, who usurps her place in her child's affections, and requires entire obedience to her commands; brothers will be disregarded, and their care and kindness practically forgotten; sisters will be forsaken for the "Sisters of Mercy;" the natural ties of God's appointment will be rent asunder—"spiritual ties" not according to his word will be considered binding and eternal: and all this under the pretence of receiving "houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, with persecutions," and of sacrificing self to the service of God.

The Sellon System destroys the social system which the people of England have long enjoyed. Improvement may be desirable, but "destroy it not, for a blessing is in it." We can serve God with our hearts, in our homes. Fathers should not give their money to support monastic institutions. Mothers should not allow their daughters to be the slaves of a self-appointed Mother Superior. This system has no foundation in the Word of God, and nothing less than this authority can require sacrifices such as we have merely attempted to describe in these pages.

Let the families and relatives and connexions of those

now entangled in this snare determine that such things shall not be suffered in England. Rome may practise these deceits ; the confessional and the convent may find their victims there. England, thank God, knows better ; and many of her daughters, as the writer can testify, are true "Sisters of Mercy," ready to visit the fatherless and the widows, the sick and the destitute, the old and the young, while they still do their duty in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call them.

## REMARKS,

&c.

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A “Reply to the Tract by the Rev. J. Spurrell, containing certain charges concerning the Society of the Sisters of Mercy,” by the “SUPERIOR OF THE SOCIETY,” having lately appeared, I take this opportunity of making a few remarks on this production.

The Superior tells us that she is required by the Bishop of Exeter to write a reply. We would remind this lady and his Lordship of the words of St. Paul, “that women adorn themselves with shamfacedness and sobriety,” as well as “with good works.” “Let the woman learn in silence, with all subjection, but I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.” Attention to this might have prevented Miss Sellon from attempting to defend the worst errors of Popery, as “Confession” and “Prayers for the dead,” while she denies nothing of any moment: she certainly does not give a reason of the hope that is in her with meekness and fear. I have not space for a reply to Miss Sellon’s tract; this will probably be done by one better qualified for the task. I shall, therefore, direct the reader’s attention to the extraordinary penance which she recommends,\* and the ceremony of washing the Sisters’ feet.† “Bodily exercise profiteth little,” saith the apostle. How can the *making the sign of the cross with the tongue on the floor* be a remedy for the sins of the tongue? “The ministry of God’s Holy Word” is recommended by the Church, and all persons who may be guilty of such sins, or have a desire to escape from temptation

\* Page 5

† Page 6.

should read, with prayer to God, those portions of his word which are written for their learning. Spiritual blindness must be darkness indeed, when any can suppose that by touching the floor with the tongue, we can "humble the erring member." "Out of the abundance of the *heart*, the mouth speaketh." "Create in me a clean heart, O God," must be the penitent's prayer.

But one might suppose that the secrets of the Confessional have been violated by bringing these things to light, as the Superior writes on the "grave injustice of repeating such things," and tells us that she has "heard of this penance as an act of self-abasement recommended by one of our bishops and eminent divines!" We remember the words, "Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also." The tongue is too unruly to be tamed by this penance.

*Washing the Sisters' feet* is done for pleasure, not for penance. Miss Sellon says:—"It is no mockery; there are few moments of my life when I feel more happy than while performing this office." Our Lord's command is referred to, of course; it is probably not kept even in the letter, as we are not told that the Sisters "wash *one another's* feet;" in this practice we may fear that the letter killeth, while the spirit giveth life. "There was a strife among the disciples which of them should be the greatest;" their Lord laid aside his greatness, and was among them as one that serveth. He taught humility by precept and by practice. The Bishop of Rome, in his pride, pretends to imitate this practice. Miss Sellon may wash the Sisters' feet, "when there is no occasion for it, nor any charity in it, and they may be proud of it as a parade of voluntary humility," but the spirit of the action,—"*the thing signified*,—forms the grand example for our imitation.\* While a Superior, as such, washes the feet of her followers, we shall think of "the vanity of humility," as well as the virtue;† washing the feet of the poor, although contrary to the custom of the country, would seem to be more in accordance with the Apostle's words, "if she have washed the Saints' feet," than this Superior's "most happy office of washing and kissing" the Sisters' feet. It is an awful mockery.

*Private Confession* is defended in this Reply. It has long been discontinued in the Reformed Church, and we shall not suffer the practice to be revived without lifting our voices

\* Scott on John xiii.† "Sisterhoods Considered," page 17.

against it. We shall not be deterred from exposing its evils, and the misery it still produces, even through the fear of wounding the feelings ; nor can we look on this subject as a mere “difference in doctrine amongst ourselves,” as confession to a priest is one great mark of distinction between our Church and the Church of Rome. Miss Sellon upholds this practice, and writes, “I have also explained what is obvious, that our services and practices are in no ways at variance with the teaching of the Holy Scriptures and the Church of England.”\* There is no command for confession to a priest in God’s word. “Confess your faults *one to another*” is not sufficient. “I will confess my transgressions *unto the Lord*; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” This is the confession required by the Bible and the Church. Dr. Pusey and Miss Sellon derive their private confession, from one or two exceptions, which merely prove the rule of the Church to be—“Confess your sins to God.”

The Superior seems to think that she has been unjustly charged with “an interference with conscience.” She says, page 9, “It may be commonly thought from the tract, that conscience was involved.” Now we have reason to believe that the Sister who had the choice given her “of submitting to discipline, or leaving the Society,” is the Sister whose case has been described in the foregoing pages. Miss Sellon says that the discipline was not for refusing to go to the Holy Communion, but “from certain circumstances;” it is certainly difficult to consider this case without suspecting an interference with conscience, but this young lady can “scrub and cook” at times, at the command of the Superior, or to comply with the rules of the Society ; this may be according to her conscience, but seems contrary to her calling, and the customs of civilized life.

Miss Sellon says, page 11,—“We are to look on our Superiors as in the place of Christ.” This is her reply to the charge of using the words—“When you hear me speak, you should think it is the voice of Jesus Christ.” The reply is an admission of the truth of the charge. She says “I am certain the words were not said *as is represented*,” but she perverts St. Paul’s words to prove that Superiors are in the place of Christ ; the meaning is plain enough,—“Servants obey your masters, for ye serve the Lord Christ.”—“Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers ; but as the servants of Christ ;” obey your masters, and, by your obedience in the

\* Reply, page 17.

state of life to which God has called you, prove yourselves to be the servants of Christ. There are no directions in the Scripture for the duties of the "Mother Superior" and "Sisters." We may suppose that the texts which apply to servants, are best suited for Miss Sellon's purpose.

The picture of the "Virgin and Child" and the "candles" are admitted to have been on the table; but Miss Sellon says "It gives a different idea from candles burning before the picture of the Virgin." I cannot see the difference.

Professions of attachment to the Church of England cannot be relied on, while we find Popish practices in the private oratory, however good and excellent the "print of the Virgin and Child" may be. And Miss Sellon should have learned a lesson on this subject from the "Inquiry before the Bishop of Exeter," in 1849.

*Prayers for the dead* are defended by the Superior, who refers to a "Judgment of Sir H. J. Fust." The prayers from "the Primer," A.D. 1559, do not seem to me to prove the point. The Homily, concerning prayer, is more to the purpose. "Neither let us dream any more that the souls of the dead are anything at all holpen by our prayers, but as the Scripture teacheth us, let us think that the soul of man, passing out of the body, goeth straightways either to heaven, or else to hell, whereof the one needeth no prayer, the other is without redemption." . . . "If any man sin, saith St. John, we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ, the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins." "But we must take heed that we call upon this advocate while we have space given us in this life, lest when we are once dead, there be no hope of salvation left unto us. For as every man sleepeth with his own cause, so every man shall rise again with his own cause. And look in what state he dieth, in the same state he shall also be judged, whether it be to salvation or damnation. Let us not, therefore, dream either of purgatory or prayers for the dead."\*

The observation of the late Chief Judge of the Court of Arches is not "sufficient" to prove that prayers for the dead i. e., for the faithful departed, are not "at variance with the Reformed Religion." They have been omitted by the Church of England, as they have no warrant in the word of God.

The mention of the Angel Raphael, in the Apocrypha, is no foundation for the invocation—"May St. Raphael go with you." The "honest old sailor,"† who was satisfied

\* Homily, concerning Prayer, third part.

† Reply, page 25.

with the simple "God bless you," spoke more in accordance with Scripture and the Church.

The following incident, in the life of the Superior, affords a subject for grave reflection. She writes, p. 24 :—"I recollect passing through one of the very worst parts of a sea-port town. It was midnight. I had an urgent message from a dying woman. A person started forward and seized my dress. The dim lamp fell on my wooden cross; 'You are a Sister of Mercy?' 'Yes ——,' " and she passed on. She tells us these are "common events" in the lives of the Sisters. Surely, English mothers will not allow their daughters to be subject to such scenes as these. There are clergymen to visit the sick at midnight. Let the number be increased if not sufficient, but let not young ladies leave their homes to wander alone through the streets for any purpose, though they may be invested by the Mother Superior with a "wooden cross."

The "refinements of polite life" are not to be destroyed by Miss Sellon's application of the Prophet Isaiah. God has ordained various ranks and degrees of men, and requires peculiar duties from each; and although Miss Sellon now considers it "a painful and alarming levity to talk of young ladies brought up in the refinements of life," she once wished her little band to be "refined."\* Surely the "fireside jest amongst ourselves," which Miss Sellon mentions,† of passing for poor women who had "seen better days," is far more painful and alarming; there are too many such poor women in our land, and their change of life, from plenty to poverty, should not be the subject of "a fireside jest."

The Superior's Reply will probably not produce the golden harvest expected; her "Homes" and "Houses," schools and colleges, may all be good in themselves, and the amount of work done may be great. "The average expenditure on account of all our works," as the Lady Superior informs the public, "is about £100 per week," and she applies to the Church for money to raise a building. The "Inquiry" produced a large sum from charitable persons; and appeals are sometimes printed and circulated to procure funds for this great work of "teaching and working out the great principles of civilization and Christianity."‡ Sister Catherine also writes to the Rev. Edward Coleridge: "We have 27 orphan girls at present. We have room

\* See page 7.

† Reply, page 26.

‡ Letter to the Rev. E. Coleridge, dated Devonport, January 14, 1852, and printed for circulation.

in the little College now for 26 sailor boys ; we have 8 lodging-houses for families ; there are now 152 inhabitants all living under certain rules ; we have two schools for girls and infants, 50 in the former, and 53 infants. At the soup-kitchen from 80 to 100 persons are daily fed with soup and bread. There are 14 belonging to the 'House of Peace,' and 85 in the Industrial School. There are now three old men, two sailors and a marine, and the wife of one of them."

These things require money, and God forbid that we should stop the flow of Christian charity ; but we must protest against the system of drawing away young ladies from their homes, the destruction of natural affection, and the disturbance of peace in the family. The Church and the country should care for the wants of the people, but let not money be given for such wants, and spent in gratifying the tastes of sentimental ladies having a desire for flowers, and pictures, and Popery. The writer has been informed that flowers are required for the admission of a Sister ; on one occasion, an express arrived in London on the Sabbath, that the flowers might be sent directly for the ceremony on Monday morning. Young ladies went on the Lord's Day, to search for flowers, but a nurseryman refuses to sell on the Sabbath ; others are tempted,—Covent Garden opens its baskets, the flowers are purchased, and packed in wool, and sent to Devonport. They cost about £7,—a small sum out of £100 per week ; but "An Admission," we may suppose, costs more than this.

The railway expenses of the Sisters must be considérable ; the branch establishments at Bristol, Gosport, and London, "begun on private resources," require some travelling from place to place ; the management of "Sisters" and "novices" requires still more.\* On the whole, and making allowances for "wealthy heiresses,"† the writer feels satisfied that the Church might do more good with the money, by increasing the number of the Clergy and Scripture Readers, Churches and Schools, and by employing ladies as district visitors, without the Confessional and Romish rites, and the "voluntary humility and will worship" of the Sisterhood.

\* Reply, page 23.

† Reply, page 22.



